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Bowen, Elsie oral history interview

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Interview with Elise Bowen by Marisa Burnham-Bestor

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Bowen, Elsie

Interviewer

Burnham-Bestor, Marisa

Date

December 11, 1998

Place

Augusta, Maine

ID Number

MOH 061

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Biographical Note

Elsie Bowen was born in Morrill, Maine (a small town of fewer than 1000 people). Her father, Ernest Bowen, was a farmer, and her mother, Flora Knowlton Bowen, was a housewife. She was the third eldest of 10 children. They lived on a farm, where Elsie continues to live today. Elsie considered herself “non-political” and actually worked for both [implied Democratic and Republican] parties. She worked in Ed Muskie’s office when he was governor doing bookkeeping and secretarial work. Elsie and her parents were involved in community groups (church, ladies groups, and the 4-H horse-back riding club). Elsie attended and graduated from (in 1939) Belfast Crosby High School about 10 miles away from Morrill. She never married. She began doing secretarial work in her last year of high school, and continued doing so after graduation at Belfast Manufacturing Company. Eight years later she moved to Augusta to work for the Department of Education and then for Governor Muskie in 1954. After Muskie’s term as governor, Elsie Bowen stayed on to work for other governors including Haskell, Clauson, Reed and Longley. After that, she went to the Clerk of House office (in the State House), and then she retired. She came out of retirement when Rodney Quinn asked her to begin working again in the Deputy Secretary of State office.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: the Depression years on the farm in Morrill, Maine; her personal response to World War II; the general "Republicanism" of Maine; her first impressions of Muskie; her experience with Muskie as a supervisor; Muskie's temper; the relationship between Marjorie Hutchinson and Ed Muskie; Elsie Bowen's secretarial position and responsibilities for Muskie; comparison of Gov. Clauson to Gov. Muskie; Muskie's relationship with the Executive Council; Bob Haskell's relationship with Muskie; impressions of Louis Jalbert; changes in responsibilities from the governor's office as secretary to the head secretary at the Clerk of House office; Muskie's environmental issues as Governor.

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Transcript

Marisa Burnham-Bestor: We're here at the Maine Democratic headquarters in Augusta, Maine. Present is Elsie Bowen and Marisa Burnham-Bestor. Please state your name and spell it.

Elsie Bowen: I'm Elsie Bowen. E-L-S-I-E, B-O-W-E-N.

MB: Thank you. Where and when were you born and raised?

EB: I was born in Morrill, M-O-R-R-I-L-L, Maine. And I grew up there except for the years that I worked in Augusta, and stayed out here a short time.

MB: How would you describe your town when you were growing up?

EB: Just a typical small town.

MB: How small was it?

EB: I would say under a thousand people. There's probably more now, but back then it was seven or eight hundred maybe.

MB: What were your parents' full names?

EB: My father was Ernest Bowen, and my mother Flora Knowlton Bowen.

MB: Was that her maiden name, Knowlton?

EB: Knowlton was her maiden name, yes.

MB: What did they do?

EB: He was a farmer all his life, and she was a housewife.

MB: So you lived on a farm?

EB: Yes I did.

MB: What were your responsibilities at the time?

EB: Oh, we did everything, except milk cows. I did not milk cows, but I helped with the haying. We carried our water, when the well went dry, from way out in the woods; that was a tough job that we kids didn't like. We helped with the gardening, of course, and the canning and the house work, whatever.

MB: Did you have brothers and sisters?

EB: Yes, I'm one of ten.

MB: Oh, my goodness.

EB: Five boys and five girls.

MB: Wow. How many of your brothers and sisters are still living?

EB: There's five still living. And I'm the third from the oldest.

MB: Did any of your other brothers and sisters become involved politically at all?

EB: No, they did not. And I didn't become involved politically. I'm very non-political really. That's why I was, I worked for both parties.

MB: Oh, I didn't realize that.

EB: Yeah, when Floyd Nute asked me to work for Governor, then Governor. Muskie, and probably it was two weeks after, that he didn't know my politics. I was not chosen because of my political beliefs, it was because I can do bookkeeping and secretarial work, the combination.

MB: That's what they needed (*Unintelligible phrase*). What was your family's financial situation? Did you get all you needed from the farm and then sell?

EB: We lived off the farm. My father sold milk through a creamery and we raised beans and corn for the corn factories, bean factories. That was our livelihood, which wasn't very much, but we got by. All healthy.

MB: How did everything, what was it like during the Depression years? Was it harder?

EB: Very tough, very tough.

MB: But your family was able to keep the farm throughout that time?

EB: Oh yes, yes. , I still live on it.

MB: Oh, really? How were your parents involved in the community religiously or politically?

EB: They were church goers, grange- goers, and my mother belonged to the various ladies' groups. That's about all there was there anyway. We belonged, 4-H Club, I belonged to the 4-H Club in growing up.

MB: I love (*Unintelligible word*) horseback riding, (*unintelligible word*) too.

EB: Oh, I love to horseback ride, too.

MB: Were your parents at all political?

EB: No.

MB: Did you remain religious as you grew up, and did your brothers and sisters?

EB: No. One sister did.

MB: Where did you go to high school?

EB: Belfast. Crosby High School.

MB: Now, is that a larger school, because your town is ...?

EB: It's larger, yes. We commuted, it was about ten miles. We rode back and forth every day.

MB: Were there any world events that were going on, other than the Depression obviously, that impacted you as a child?

EB: Well, of course, WWII. I had brothers, all my brothers were in the service, and one was wounded, but they all survived.

MB: How did that impact you as a . . . How old were your brothers when they went to war?

EB: They were the age, they were drafted, all of them except one, he was in the National Guard, but they were all the age when they were drafted.

MB: So you were a little older, right? Because you said you were the third.

EB: Third, yeah. , I had one brother older.

MB: So were you still living at home at that time?

EB: Yes.

MB: What was it like on the farm when they were gone?

EB: Well, they were missed, but we, there was enough of us so we helped make up, filled in.

MB: During your high school years, what were your interests? What did you do?

EB: Well we didn't participate in many activities because we had to ride, get the ride home, so I didn't take part in any extracurricular activities.

MB: You also had a lot of responsibilities at home, so.

EB: Yes, I did.

MB: At that time, did you have any idea what you wanted to do with the rest of your life?

EB: I would like to have been a nurse, but I knew my folks couldn't afford it. So I followed the secretarial course, and I started working in an office almost a year before I graduated, after school and weekends.

MB: Were you successful as a student, academically?

EB: I got by. Yes, I made good ranks.

MB: What college did you, or, did you attend college?

EB: No, I did not.

MB: What year did you graduate from high school?

EB: Nineteen thirty -nine.

MB: And did you have a husband, or a, had you met your husband at that time?

EB: I've not been married.

MB: Oh, really? I didn't realize that. When did you, how old were you when you graduated high school?

EB: Nineteen.

MB: Oh, okay. So at that time, had you decided what political party to join?

EB: I joined the Republican Party because my father was a very strong Republican and as far as he was concerned, there was only one party.

MB: That's how it was in Maine?

EB: Yes, that's right. But when I went to vote, I voted as I chose, in the regular election.

MB: So the only real influence on your decision was that your father was Republican. That's what you were generally exposed to?

EB: He expected us all to enroll as Republicans. I had a sister who worked in Washington, D.C.. She came home, she had signed up as a Democrat. He wouldn't give her a ride to the polls on election day because she was going to vote Democrat. That's how strong they were then.

MB: What sort of, did he, you said he wasn't really politically involved, and so he never did anything for the party.

EB: No, no, he did not.

MB: Do you remember what was going on politically when you decided, when you went to choose a party? Do you remember ...?

EB: No, nothing spectacular that I recall.

MB: And you said that, I mean, after high school you got a secretarial position?

EB: I stayed on where I was working during school for eight years.

MB: Wow. Where was that again?

EB: In Belfast.

MB: At a . . . ?

EB: A place they made mens' trousers B Belfast, (*name*) Manufacturing Company.

MB: And you were a secretary there?

EB: Secretary-bookkeeper. I was the office, that's all there was.

MB: When did you decide that you were interested in becoming involved in being a secretary for political organizations and what have you?

EB: I didn't decide that. I decided it was time for a change, so I came to Augusta and worked in the Department of Education for eight years. And then apparently when Muskie was elected governor, they were hunting for someone who could do bookkeeping and secretarial work. And a friend knew that I could do that so she recommended me, or suggested me, whatever.

MB: And she suggested you to Floyd Nute?

EB: Yes, to her boss, and he knew Floyd Nute, [Maurice] Maury Williams.

MB: So what year was this?

EB: Forty-seven I believe. Was Muskie elected in forty-seven?

MB: To governor?

EB: Yes.

MB: Fifty-four.

EB: Oh, fifty-four, yes '54 it was, because I worked in Education for eight years.

MB: What education?

EB: Department of Education, State Department of Education.

MB: And you were secretary-bookkeeper there as well?

EB: Just secretary, still with the State House.

MB: What's the difference, exactly? What are the responsibilities of a secretarial position versus a bookkeeping position? How does that work?

EB: Well, secretarial, as a general rule you take dictation, you type letters, whatever, filing, and bookkeeping is strictly keeping records.

MB: Oh, so numbers.

EB: Oh yes, yes.

MB: And you were still living at the farm at home at that time?

EB: Yes.

MB: So that was a pretty long commute for you, wow. Had you met Ed Muskie at all before?

EB: No, I had not. No.

MB: Did you have any impressions of the people in the State building, and what was going on politically around the time that he became governor? Were you staying aware of . . .?

EB: No. The only thing politically was, they had the rumor going in the Education office that when there was a change in party, everybody lost their job. That was taken for granted, but it was not true. That's the only political thing that I ever heard.

MB: That must have been stressful.

EB: It was, to say the least.

MB: So your friend who suggested you to Floyd Nute, what was her position?

EB: I believe she did bookkeeping in the Finance Department.

MB: Okay, so, and she knew Maury Williams, not . . .?

EB: Yeah, Maury worked in, he was director I believe, director of finance for a while.

MB: So you joined the staff in '54 and you were hired as a bookkeeper and secretary.

EB: Secretary-bookkeeper, yes.

MB: Did you keep the Blaine House books as well?

EB: Yes.

MB: What was the difference? Wasn't there, I was under the impression that the Blaine House was where the governor lived.

EB: Right.

MB: What else goes on there?

EB: Well, back then they entertained a lot. This governor has not entertained that much and I know Governor [James] Longley did not. But I remember they used to have, it seems like it was every week or every few weeks at the beginning of a legislative session, they would ask different officers from the counties that they were honoring to come in, just have coffee, whatever.

MB: And so that would, all the expenses from that would go, and you would ...?

EB: There was an account for entertainment.

MB: Oh, gotcha. So, when you met Ed Muskie, when you joined the staff and met him, what was your first impression of him?

EB: Sort of overwhelming, you know. He's such a tall, distinguished looking man.

MB: Were you intimidated at all?

EB: Well, I don't know. Yes, I suppose I should say I was, you know, being a little country girl, seeing him, being the governor. Yes, I probably was.

MB: Was it exciting when you ...?

EB: Oh, yes, yes.

MB: How did your father react to the fact that you were working for a Democratic governor?

EB: He wasn't too pleased at first, but then he was. He was proud that, you know, he'd seen what Muskie was doing and so forth, and he was proud. He came around.

MB: As the, Muskie was really the first time that the Republicans were really defeated, so your father must have been having a little bit of trouble with that.

EB: Well, probably. , I don't recall that he was because he wasn't that strong politically.

MB: Did he end up, do you know if he ended up supporting Muskie at all, or was he always kind of ...?

EB: I doubt that he did, because nobody ever said how they were voting, really. And you know, he knew his kids were enrolled as Republicans, but he never asked me to, how I was enrolled after that.

MB: And did you predominantly vote Republican or Democratic, or were you, whichever candidate you liked better?

EB: Party didn't, when I voted, party did not matter. It was for who I knew and had trust in. And sometimes I didn't vote at all, or for, you know, a particular position if I didn't know about the people.

MB: Did you know about Muskie during his campaign for governor?

EB: Oh yes, oh yes.

MB: What did you ...?

EB: Did I vote for him, you wanted to ask? Yes, I did.

MB: What did you, it was, there was the incident in which the other, the Republican governor really kind of, "stubbed his toe" was an expression that Joan Arnold used, and that Muskie really kind of got in on that. Were you aware of what was going on?

EB: No, I guess I wasn't aware of that.

MB: Did you just, did you have reasons for not liking the Republican governor who was running against him?

EB: Maybe there was something that I've forgotten, like Joan had mentioned, but, I just thought it was time for a change.

MB: Yeah. So, did you get to know him very well working there?

EB: Oh yes, yes.

MB: What did you think of him as a boss?

EB: Excellent, excellent.

MB: Was he, I've been told that he had quite a temper. Did you experience it at all?

EB: I saw evidence of it once or twice.

MB: What was that like?

EB: Well, it was a natural reaction for him. One instance I think of was, one of his commissioners had double-crossed him, (I guess that's the right word to use),, publicly. I can't remember if it was in the newspaper or a speech, and he was ripping him up one side and down the other. We could hear him. His office door was closed but we could hear him, and he buzzed me (*unintelligible word*) and said, "Would you get so-and-so?" So he came over immediately. And I buzzed the governor and said, "Mr. So-and-so is here." He came out, put his arm around him, "Good morning, So-and-so." You know, this is the kind of man he was, he just had to let it out. And he did, but the public didn't really know that.

MB: Under what conditions did he lose his temper like that? Like, what caused that?

EB: Well, this was the release that this man had made that was not true, and he had not told the governor about what he was saying. As one of his department heads, he should have.

MB: How did the people in the office respond when he lost his temper like that? Was it uncomfortable?

EB: Oh no, no, just let it slide. It didn't happen too many times anyway. That's the one that stands out in my mind.

MB: Your office was down the hall, right?

EB: On the third floor, yes.

MB: Who worked with you in that office?

EB: Well, initially I was down the hall, not in the main office. But probably six months or so into his administration, with Marjorie Hutchinson, his administrative secretary who had worked for him when he was a lawyer, and Floyd Nute the press secretary, I think he sat with us after I went down there. And then later on security took one of the front desks.

MB: So did you have your own office?

EB: Oh, no one did, no.

MB: Now, where did, where was Muskie's office in relation to where you were located?

EB: We were down the hall. You entered our office and just to the left was Muskie's office, a big elegant office.

MB: And did his other, were all of his secretaries in the office with you?

EB: Various offices, no, down the hall, two or three different offices, and be probably three of us in an office.

MB: So your immediate office mates were Marjorie Hutchinson and Floyd Nute?

EB: Yes. Not when I first went to work there, but later on.

MB: Oh. Who was there when you first worked there?

EB: In the front office, Marge Hutchinson and (I can't confirm this name spelling) Zelma Shumate, who was his appointment secretary.

MB: Before Joan Arnold?

EB: Yes. Well I, Joan Arnold, I was appointed secretary for quite a while.

MB: Oh, really?

EB: Yes. I don't remember when Joanie came aboard.

MB: What was Muskie's relationship with his financial advisor, Maurice Williams, like?

EB: Very close, very friendly, very trusting.

MB: Maurice was a Republican, right?

EB: I don't know.

MB: Do you know how their relationship progressed throughout ...?

EB: It remained good.

MB: What about Floyd Nute?

EB: It was good, too.

MB: He was the first person you met on the staff, right?

EB: Yes.

MB: Did you and he have a close relationship?

EB: Not close, but we were friendly, you know, and cordial and all that. There was really no reason to be close.

MB: Were you close with anyone who worked on the staff? Did you become, I mean, you lived far away so it must have been hard, you couldn't exactly go out for coffee, you know, too many times.

EB: No, I don't know if any of the staff did. We were friendly, that's enough in an office.

MB: You mentioned Marjorie Hutchinson, and she had been in his office in Waterville as well. So she and he were pretty close.

EB: Very close. She was almost a mother image to him, that's the way she came across.

MB: What makes you say that? What was it like?

EB: Well, she protected him if he needed protection. She was very, very helpful to him, and she did go to Washington with him when he went down there.

MB: Did anyone else from the staff go to Washington with him?

EB: No.

MB: Oh, wow.

EB: They asked me to go and I didn't think I wanted to. And Bob Huse, who went down with him, called me two or three times to see if I'd changed my mind, but I didn't want the big city life, I didn't

MB: Who's Bob Huse?

EB: He also worked for Muskie. He came in, oh I can't remember the years, but, I don't remember his position exactly. I don't know. But he was one, a member of the staff anyway.

MB: What exactly, what type, as a secretary, you were the appointment secretary first, then what was your position?

EB: No. , I was a regular secretary and bookkeeper first, and later on became the appointment secretary when I moved down to the front office.

MB: So, what were your, what sort of transcripts and what have you were you transcribing when you were ...?

EB: His correspondence. He dictated everything in the machine and I took it off the machine.

MB: Does anything stand out in your mind that you remember as being interesting?

EB: The only thing that sticks out in my mind, was he apparently was dictating one weekend at his cottage out on China Lake. And all of a sudden he stopped in the middle of a sentence and said, "Get down Susie," or Susie, whatever. And I thought, "What's going on here?" Then I realized his dog was bothering him. For a minute I didn't know what was going on.

MB: Typing it in.

EB: Yeah, yeah.

MB: Do you remember any of the issues that were going on around the time? Any of the political issues that he might have grappled with over making a decision as to what side he wanted to be on?

EB: Nothing in particular sticks in my mind.

MB: Were there any issues that were of interest to you that ...?

EB: It was all very interesting, but I can't name any particular thing that sticks in my mind. It was a great education.

MB: When you were then promoted to appointment secretary, do you remember, or, I don't know, when your position changed I guess to the appointment secretary, do you remember if he would request certain people that he wanted to have appointments with?

EB: Yeah.

MB: Who were they?

EB: Oh, do I remember them? No, this, when you say appointment, that's the people that come in, call and want to see him, number one. And number two, he appointed members to all these committees and commissions and whatever that were created by the legislature, and that's called appointments. So he would have to contact these people and then their names had to be posted to be approved by the Executive Council.

MB: Oh, I see.

EB: I still did the bookkeeping, too. It wasn't a full -time job as such.

MB: What, were you appointment secretary then after Joan left, or before she got there?

EB: Before she got there.

MB: Oh, I see. So how long of a time did you spend before you switched positions?

EB: I really don't remember.

MB: Did most of the people on his staff enjoy working for him and get along with him well?

EB: Oh yes, oh yes.

MB: Were there any problems?

EB: No.

MB: And there was no conflict of political views ever?

EB: No, no.

MB: What was the most difficult part of his personality to get along with?

EB: There was nothing difficult about his personality as far as I'm concerned.

MB: You said he, you didn't notice that he would lose his temper too often, so that wasn't ...?

EB: No, no.

MB: When he was governor, I mean, you were in the State House during this time, what was the atmosphere in the State House like?

EB: Well, we didn't get out around the State House too much, we were so busy in the office. But it was friendly. Even though he was a new party, it was friendly. People respected him.

MB: After he left, did it change? Did you, because you were still there after he went down to the Senate.

EB: Yes.

MB: So how did the transition, what was that like?

EB: The transition was, let's see, he was followed by, of course Bob Haskell was in there for five days, and I was the only office girl that stayed on with him.

MB: Oh, really?

EB: And then Governor [Clinton] Clauson came in, and it was the same. It was much easier going because he was not a businessman like Muskie was. And then when John Reed, I think he was the next one that came in, total change. You didn't speak to Democrats. I was walking down the hall one day, I stopped to talk with someone down the hall, and John Reed's executive secretary came along and saw me talking with a Democrat. When I got back in the office she let me have it. She says, "We are a Republican office and we do not talk with Democrats." I said, "But they pay my salary and if one of them wants to say 'hello' to me and pass the time of day, I'm not going to snub them."

MB: Muskie wasn't like that.

EB: Not at all, not at all. No.

MB: I guess he must have had to be more interactive with the Republicans, seeing as how he was the only Democrat there.

EB: Yes, yes.

MB: With the Executive Council, what was his relationship with them like?

EB: It was good. Of course they had their disagreements when it came to naming somebody to a particular committee. The Republicans, it was all Republican. They'd have who they wanted and he'd have who he wanted; they'd have to compromise. And they did, they got along well.

MB: You said he was very business, very much like a businessman. What do you mean? Could you describe what you mean?

EB: Well, he knew procedures. He had the background. And Governor Clauson, of course he was commissioner of internal revenue service, but I think he relied on his underlings, maybe I should say, (but it's not the right word), to carry on. He relied on them a lot. And Muskie, he didn't use them, which is what he's supposed to do, but also he knew what was going on, and I'm not sure that Governor Clauson was that much aware. I don't mean he was out of it, or anything like that, but he was more of a, enjoyed people I guess more.

MB: You mentioned also that you stayed on for Bob Haskell's five days in office. Why did no one else stay on? What was the circumstances?

EB: He didn't need them. See, it was a transition. Muskie left early so he could get committees or whatever in Washington, and so there was no need of it. I remember he dictated one letter to me and he said, "Read it back." And then he said, "Does that sound humble enough?" which is very typical of him. And it's a side of him that people didn't know.

MB: How well did you know him [Bob Haskell]?

EB: Well, he'd been senate president for quite a while, so we were on speaking terms, you know.

MB: So what was his, he wasn't normally humble, or he was?

EB: No, not normally, he didn't come across that way. But underneath he was, I think, he was like that (*unintelligible word*).

MB: Was his relationship with Muskie a good one?

EB: Yes. Of course they clashed once in a while over procedures or whatever, but, yes, it was a good working relationship.

MB: Do you know if Muskie was particularly close with anyone other than Marjorie Hutchinson in the office?

EB: Well, I think he and Maury Williams were quite close. Offhand, I don't think of anyone else right now.

MB: How did Muskie's time as governor, and the atmosphere that you described, a kind of openness and, you know, everyone trying to get along and getting used to the newness, how did that compare with past governors who had been there before?

EB: Well, I don't know because I hadn't worked for past governors. But I know they were friendly, I guess, because if you walk in and out of the State House and they were going over to

the Blaine House, they always spoke. All except one, he'd just walk by and not see a peon. But

MB: Who was that?

EB: That was [Horace] Hildreth. But Governor Cross always spoke and had a smile.

MB: And this was your experience when you were working in the Education Department, right?

EB: Yes, yes.

MB: What did the other people in the State House, the legislators both Republican and Democratic, do you remember any legislator sticking out in your mind as having, you know, a real positive or a real negative reaction or relationship with Muskie?

EB: No, I don't. You know, Louis Jalbert thought he was his major confidante, but everybody took Louis with a grain of salt.

MB: What was his position?

EB: He was one of the legislators.

MB: And he and Muskie were close, then?

EB: No, they weren't close, but I mean, Louis thought that he should advise anybody and everybody I think.

MB: How did Muskie deal with that?

EB: Oh, fine. He rode along with it. No, he got along with everyone that I can recall.

MB: When he was running for Senate, during that campaign time, how was the office functioning and getting along during that time?

EB: Well, it got along fine because politics and campaign were supposed to be divorced, and they were, you know, you don't do any campaigning from the office.

MB: Was he out of the office a lot, though?

EB: I'm sure he was. As I say, I can't recall little things like that, but I'm sure he had to be on the road some.

MB: When he was running, was there kind of a sense of confidence that he would get the ...?

EB: Yes, I think so. , I think so.

MB: So were the people in the office kind of nervous, wondering what was going to happen with their jobs at all?

EB: I don't think so.

MB: Because you said you were one of the only ones who stayed on, right, after ...?

EB: Just for the five days with Governor Haskell.

MB: Right. And then did people come back then?

EB: Yes, yes.

MB: Oh, okay. So out of all the people in the office, who actually continued to work in the State House with you after Muskie went down to ...?

EB: In the governor's office?

MB: Yeah.

EB: All of them except Marjorie Hutchinson, because she went to Washington with him. And Governor Clauson, of course, had his own executive secretary who had worked for him in internal revenue, who was also his niece.

MB: But did Floyd Nute, did he continue?

EB: Yes, he did.

MB: He continued as the ...

EB: As I recall, he did. You know, it's so long ago, I can't remember everything.

MB: Right, right. What about Maury Williams?

EB: Seems like Maury went to Washington with Muskie, but I'm not sure, I can't remember.

MB: Did, when he parted for Washington, did everyone kind of part on good terms and support?

EB: Oh, yes.

MB: Did you stay in contact with him at all after he went to Washington?

EB: Well, not him and me, no, no, there was no reason to. I mean, after all he's a United States Senator and I'm a secretary.

MB: What did, how did your experience in the State House as a secretary change after he had left? Was it basically the same?

EB: Oh, yes, the same.

MB: Did you, you stayed in the same office and you had the same responsibilities?

EB: Yes, yeah.

MB: What did you, did you follow what was going on in Washington?

EB: Yes, I think more since I knew him. , I was more aware of what was going on, how his name was publicized quite a bit.

MB: And what did you think of everything that happened?

EB: Well, everything was favorable for him. He was important I think down there.

MB: What did you think of his environmental and all the things that he supported?

EB: Oh, I think it's excellent. I think he made a great impact on that.

MB: How do you think he did that? How do you think the people of Maine over all responded to what he was doing?

EB: I think they agreed with him and thought he was doing a good job.

MB: Now, in 1968, were you still working in the office at that time?

EB: Sixty-eight, who was governor in '68?

MB: That was the ...

EB: Well, yes. , I stayed there until the middle of Longley.

MB: Oh, wow.

EB: Longley's term.

MB: So what year, so what would that, you did '54 until what year?

EB: Oh, I can't remember. Was it, four with Muskie? , I don't know offhand.

MB: But you, were you, when Humphrey and Muskie were running for president and vice president, were you aware of what was going on?

EB: Oh, yes.

MB: And did you support that ticket as well?

EB: Yes.

MB: Were there any issues that you can remember specifically that you disagreed with Muskie about?

EB: No, I don't think of any.

MB: When the Humphrey-Muskie ticket was up, a lot of people didn't support it, even Democrats, because the Humphrey, Humphrey's position with everything that was going on in Vietnam beforehand. Did that impact you at all?

EB: No, no.

MB: Is there any issue that you can remember that you really said, "The Republicans are really right on this one?"

EB: No, I don't think so. None that I recall.

MB: And when you retired from the, from your work at the State House, was that your retirement? Were you ...?

EB: No, no, I went from, see I worked for seven different governors counting Governor Haskell, and in the, I worked for Governor Longley maybe four or five months and then I decided I'd like to move on. So I went to the Clerk of House office, and then I went, I retired. And when Rodney Quinn was appointed Secretary of State, he took me out of retirement and made me the Deputy Secretary of State. And I stayed there, was it four or eight years? , I can't remember. I've been retired seven or eight years now.

MB: So you went from working at the State House to, what was your next position?

EB: The Clerk of the House. Still in the State House.

MB: Oh, now what's the responsibilities of the Clerk of the House?

EB: Well, I was his secretary that oversaw all the other secretaries; just another secretarial job.

MB: Was it much different from, was the atmosphere much different?

EB: Oh yes, yes, it was not the responsibilities that you get in the governor's office.

MB: What type of responsibilities?

EB: It was typing, typing. This was strictly letters, correspondence for various legislators that chose to use the secretarial pool.

MB: And what was the reason that you changed positions?

EB: I was just unhappy with things the way they were.

MB: Was it just, kind of, you'd been doing it for too long, or were you having conflicts with ...?

EB: No, there was a lot of unhappy people in the office when Longley was governor because his sister was the kind that, if I was talking on the phone, she'd listen. If you and I were standing close together talking, she'd come up with a notebook and listen to what you said. (*unintelligible word*) And I said, I didn't need that, I could retire any time. So I chose to leave and I was asked to work in the Clerk of the House office.

MB: What was his sister doing in the office?

EB: She was his administrative assistant, executive secretary or whatever the title might be.

MB: Had you had problems like that with any of the other governors?

EB: Oh no, no indeed.

MB: That sounds quite irritating. So you went to the Clerk of the Office position, yes, you went to the Clerk position ...

EB: Clerk of the House.

MB: ... Clerk of the House, and then after that you retired, and you were still living on your farm.

EB: I retired, but I didn't stop working.

MB: So what'd you do?

EB: And before I did get through, Rod Quinn asked me to work in the secretary of states' office with him. So I stayed there until I retired.

MB: So, now what was your position working in the secretary of state's office?

EB: It was secretarial.

MB: But how was that different?

EB: Well, it's really not different, except I was just working for him and him only, and I had quite a bit of responsibility, but that, you know, just routine office work.

MB: What was he like?

EB: Excellent. Very smart man, just like Muskie. I've worked with some very intelligent people.

MB: I don't think I'm familiar with what he did. What exactly, he was the secretary of state, obviously, right?

EB: Yeah. Actually it's called the Department of State, but the secretary of state, and under that is Motor Vehicle and corporations and various other groups.

MB: So, when you retired you retired to your farm. You've lived on the farm your whole life, right?

EB: Yes.

MB: Did you continue to have, to do all the work to keep up the farm?

EB: Oh no, because my father had passed away. And I just did what I could to keep it up. I had a brother living next door who helped; he had a great interest in the farm. So, it's still standing. Still a roof over the house.

MB: Is it still producing milk and all of that?

EB: Oh, no indeed, no, no. When my father was sick we got rid of the cattle.

MB: But you must have a lot of land up there, then.

EB: Quite a bit, yeah.

MB: Now that you've retired, what do you do?

EB: I tell people I shovel in winter and mow the lawn in the summer. But I do have a fairly large garden. , I have a friend who helps me, and that's about it.

MB: You said that you come down to Augusta often.

EB: Yes, I have friends here and, just business trips or friendly trips.

MB: Now, were, did you stay in touch with any of your friends from high school?

EB: Oh yes, because they live around me.

MB: Have you remained political at all?

EB: I never was political. That's why I worked for both parties, because I was very non-political.

MB: Was that typical? Or was that kind of odd?

EB: Very unusual for any one person to work for both parties.

MB: How did it seem different when you were working for one party versus the other party?

EB: Well, as far as I was concerned, I didn't make it different because I was, I didn't talk out of the office. When I left the office that was it, nothing was discussed about anything, nothing was discussed, period. So, I did my day's work, and that was it.

MB: Sounds like a good attitude probably. In your opinion ---, let me switch tapes first.

End of Side One
Side Two

MB: In your opinion, what was one goal or change that Muskie most wanted to make through politics?

EB: I don't know. Of course when he went to Washington, it was environmental for one thing. But state-wise, I don't remember anything in particular.

MB: Do you remember any of the major projects that he really seemed to catch himself up in and get really involved with?

EB: No, I don't offhand. , I'm sorry.

MB: That's okay. When he was governor, was he at all environmentally aware? Did he show an interest in that area at that time?

EB: Oh, I believe so, but we didn't have a Department of Environmental Protection then, so it would just go along with all the other problems of the state.

MB: The state at that time had, I mean, there was a lot of logging, right?

EB: Yes.

MB: And, was Muskie in support of that, or did he seem really environmentally aware even then and wanting to stop all of that (*unintelligible word*)?

EB: I don't think it was an issue then. There wasn't as much logging as there is now. There's not the big companies, there wasn't the big companies in Maine that there is now. So, no, I don't think he was involved that much.

MB: There was the highway issue, moving the highway. What was his stance on that?

EB: Well, there again, I don't remember. I'm sure he supported the interstate, he would have to really. But other than that, he wanted to improve the roads. He was all for highway improvement, but I don't remember any particular big issue.

MB: Were taxes ever an issue in Maine?

EB: Taxes are an issue all the time.

MB: I never heard anyone really talk about the tax issue in Maine.

EB: I'm sure it was an issue back when he was governor, but I don't remember any particular item.

MB: Is there anything else that you might want to add, or can you think of any strange stories about him?

EB: I don't think so, no. It's so long ago for one thing. But no, I don't think of anything, except that he was an excellent boss and working for all the governors was an excellent education.

MB: What do you think you learned most working in the State House?

EB: Keep my mouth shut.

MB: Politics, right?

EB: Yes, politics, yeah.

MB: Were there, do you remember any scandals that happened?

EB: Not involving the office. There was of course the liquor scandal, which was outside the office, and I don't remember the details of that now, but that was a big thing at one time.

MB: Did that affect the office at all?

EB: No, no, it didn't.

MB: Did the, I just thought of something I wanted to ask. Did the legislators, when the various other governors that you worked for were in office, the legislators outside of that, did they always have good relationships with the governors, or was there ever a governor where the legislators from either party were just kind of like, you know?

EB: No, I think there was a good relationship. If a legislator wanted to see the governor, no

matter what his party, they saw him. But, well, I shouldn't say that. I know one man, a member of the Executive Council, called me from his home to my home. Because, see, after Reed was governor, I wasn't the appointment secretary any longer, and he couldn't get in to see the governor. He wanted to know if there was anything I could do to get him to see the governor. It was just a small thing, but it was politics, strictly politics.

MB: What was Reed's position? He was a legislator?

EB: He was governor.

MB: Oh, he was the governor. So who was trying to ...?

EB: One of the members of the Executive Council.

MB: Oh really, and they were having trouble getting an appointment.

EB: Yeah, getting in to see him. And they should have access to him, certainly, because they were right next door, but he couldn't do it. Or else he was calling for a friend. I can't remember exactly now, but, it was important enough to him to call from his home to my home, which is very unusual.

MB: Okay. Thank you so much.

EB: Well, you're welcome.

End of Interview